



**Ruth Stringer**  
County Counsel

### **Mission Statement**

*County Counsel serves and protects the county, its treasury, and its governing body, by providing timely and accurate legal services and aggressively representing the county in litigation. Legal services shall be performed maintaining the highest professional and ethical standards while fostering high morale and productivity in the work place through collaborative efforts dedicated to continuous improvement.*



### **GOALS**

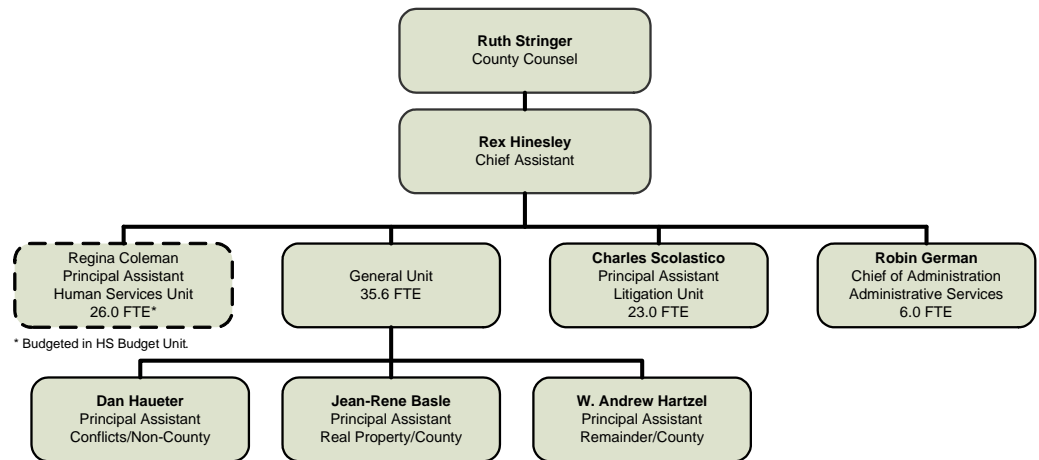
**PROVIDE ACCURATE, TIMELY AND RELIABLE DOCUMENT AND CONTRACT REVIEW AND LEGAL ADVICE**

**PROVIDE EXEMPLARY LITIGATION SERVICES, BY DEFENDING CLIENT ACTIONS & DECISIONS, AND ADVOCATING OUR CLIENTS' POSITIONS**

**REPRESENT THE COUNTY BY ADVOCATING AND PROTECTING THE INTERESTS OF CHILDREN SERVED BY OUR CLIENTS**

## **COUNTY COUNSEL**

### **ORGANIZATIONAL CHART**



### **DESCRIPTION OF MAJOR SERVICES**

County Counsel provides civil legal services to the Board of Supervisors, County Administrative Office, county departments, commissions, special districts, and school districts. County Counsel also provides legal services to various joint powers authorities and represents the courts and judges on certain matters. In performing its duties, the County Counsel's Office is divided into three operational units: the Litigation Unit, which handles tort and civil rights litigation, workers' compensation and code enforcement; the Human Services Unit, which serves the Human Services departments; and the General Unit, which provides legal services primarily to county departments supported by the general fund.

### **2007-08 SUMMARY OF BUDGET UNITS**

	Appropriation	Revenue	Local Cost	Staffing
<b>General Fund</b>				
County Counsel	9,910,938	4,454,209	5,456,729	71.6

## GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND PERFORMANCE MEASURES

### GOAL 1: PROVIDE ACCURATE, TIMELY AND RELIABLE DOCUMENT AND CONTRACT REVIEW AND LEGAL ADVICE TO THE OFFICE'S CLIENTS TO ASSIST THEM TO ACHIEVE THEIR OBJECTIVES

*Objective A: Complete contract reviews and revisions within two weeks of receipt.*

*Objective B: Respond to requests for other legal services, including drafting of legal analysis, by agreed upon target date.*

MEASUREMENT	2005-06 Actual	2006-07 Actual	2007-08 Target	2007-08 Estimate	2008-09 Target
1A. Percentage of contracts that are reviewed and revised within two weeks of receipt.	N/A	99%	95%	95%	95%
1B. Percentage of clients who ranked satisfactory or above on advice they received from attorneys which was clear, relevant, and timely.	N/A	*	95%	95%	95%

\*Due to changes in key management staff no survey was sent out in 2006-07.

#### Status

This goal represents working with county departments and other clients to expedite accurate processing of the County Counsel's general advisory function when the office is called upon to assist its clients in the performance of their obligations. If the efficiency of the County Counsel's Office is increased, it will amount to a cost saving for the county as a whole in the administration of day-to-day business.

County Counsel instituted an Office wide Contract Review Log requirement effective July 1, 2006. During 2006-07, the Office conducted 3,212 contract reviews/revisions in which 99% were done within the two-week target.

As noted above, no annual client satisfaction survey was conducted in 2006-07, however the office will be developing a new client satisfaction survey for 2007-08.

### GOAL 2: PROVIDE EXEMPLARY LITIGATION SERVICES, BY DEFENDING ACTIONS AND DECISIONS, AND ADVOCATING POSITIONS OF THE OFFICE'S CLIENTS TO ASSIST THEM TO ACHIEVE THEIR OBJECTIVES

*Objective A: Track incoming litigation cases with the goal of minimizing liability and maximizing county recovery; resolve cases with a positive outcome within liability targets.*

MEASUREMENT	2005-06 Actual	2006-07 Actual	2007-08 Target	2007-08 Estimate	2008-09 Target
2A. Percentage of cases being litigated that resulted in resolution in favor of the county or within liability targets.	N/A	94%	95%	95%	95%

#### Status

This goal represents working with county departments and other clients to ensure the office renders superior litigation services and tracks the effectiveness of the office's litigation services by quantifying the results of litigation seeking damages against the county and those cases where the county prevails and receives monetary awards.

With this ongoing feedback, we can more effectively address client needs and assist clients in meeting their objectives. In 2006-07, we resolved 94% of the cases in favor of the county or within the liability target set by Risk Management.

### 2006-07 ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- ❖ Provided primary legal assistance to the Board for the Registered Sex Offender Ordinance
- ❖ Prevailed in Public Records Act litigation over the disclosure of the Board members' calendars and e-mails and upheld the Board's deliberative process privilege
- ❖ Negotiated a \$9.5 million settlement with Travelers Insurance on a coverage claim for the Colonies suit
- ❖ Provided primary legal assistance in the preparation and adoption of the General Plan (GP) update, the revised Development Code and the certification of the associated Environmental Impact Report. Settled litigation brought by the Attorney General and others, alleging that adoption of the GP would result in greenhouse gas impacts under AB 32
- ❖ Worked with the California Welfare Directors Association and other counties to draft Senate Bill 84 to collect overpayments to foster care providers & adoption assistance recipients
- ❖ Assisted the Statewide Automated Welfare System Consortium IV JPA to expand from 9 counties to 39 counties serving over 13,000 users statewide
- ❖ Provided Ethics and Public Records Act training to each member of the Board and their staffs and provided ethics training to Board appointed boards, committees and commissions

### GOAL 3: REPRESENT THE COUNTY AND ADVOCATE TO PROTECT THE INTERESTS OF THE CLIENT IN CASES INVOLVING CHILDREN REFERRED TO DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES

*Objective A: Track and monitor cases with the goal of recording case outcomes for successful resolutions as determined by the Department of Children's Services, to increase protection for abused and neglected children in our community.*

MEASUREMENT	2005-06 Actual	2006-07 Actual	2007-08 Target	2007-08 Estimate	2008-09 Target
3A. Percentage of juvenile cases being resolved with the desired outcome as determined by the Department of Children's Services.	N/A	93%	90%	90%	90%

#### Status

This goal and objective represents working on behalf of the Department of Children's Services to litigate cases in the Juvenile Dependency Court resulting in a desired outcome as determined by the department. As cases are resolved and closed, the increase in caseload will thereby be limited. In 2006-07, we resolved 93% of the cases with the desired outcome as determined by the Department of Children's Services.

### APPROVED ADDITIONAL GENERAL FUND FINANCING (POLICY ITEMS)

Brief Description of Policy Item	Budgeted Staffing	Appropriation	Dept. Revenue	Local Cost
1. Upgrade computer system hardware and software.	-	200,000	-	200,000
2. Increase in general unit attorney staffing to meet demands.	1.0	185,800	-	185,800
3. Increase in general unit support staffing to meet increased demands.	2.0	165,135	-	165,135
4. Additional Principal Assistant County Counsel position.	1.0	256,250	-	256,250

MEASUREMENT	2005-06 Actual	2006-07 Actual	2007-08 Target	2007-08 Estimate	2008-09 Target
P1. Percentage completion of upgrade to computer systems hardware/platform software.	N/A	50%	100%	100%	100%
P2. Percentage increase of General Unit Attorney Hours from 2006-07.	N/A	47%	65%	65%	75%
P3. Percentage increase of General Unit Support Hours.	N/A	N/A	10%	10%	10%
P4. Percentage increase of responsiveness to legal service demands.	N/A	N/A	10%	10%	10%

#### Status

In 2006-07, the office received \$200,000 in one-time general fund financing to provide a more efficient Microsoft supported system. As of December 2007, the installation of approximately 90% of the computer system upgrade has been accomplished. The remaining items outlined in the plan will be fully implemented by the end of 2007-08.

In that same fiscal year, the office also received \$185,800 in ongoing general fund financing for 1.0 additional general unit advisory/transactional unit attorney. The new attorney was hired in January 2007.

In 2007-08, the office received \$165,135 in ongoing general fund financing for 1.0 paralegal and 1.0 executive secretary II for the general unit. These positions will provide support to the growing legal needs of the general unit. The paralegal position remains vacant due to failed recruitments. The Executive Secretary II position was hired in July 2007.

Also in 2007-08, the office received \$256,250 in ongoing general fund financing for 1.0 Principal Assistant County Counsel. This position was added to provide for greater depth within the office and for succession planning purposes as several high level administrative attorneys are expected to retire within a short period of time. The position was filled and the vacancy created behind it was filled in August 2007.

## 2008-09 REQUESTS FOR ADDITIONAL GENERAL FUND FINANCING (POLICY ITEMS), INCLUDING NEW CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM (CIP) PROJECTS, OR BUSINESS PROCESS IMPROVEMENT (BPI) RESERVE FUNDS

Brief Description of Policy Item, CIP, or BPI reserve funds request	Budgeted Staffing	Appropriation	Dept. Revenue	Local Cost
1. Remodel of third floor County Counsel offices (CIP Request).	-	450,000	-	450,000
The County Counsel offices on the fourth floor were recently remodeled. The fourth floor remodel upgraded cubicles and provided ergonomically correct workstations to staff. Additionally, safety concerns over outdated electrical were also addressed. This new request is for one-time funds to complete a remodel of the County Counsel offices located on the third floor as the same issues regarding cubicle upgrades and electrical concerns apply to the third floor.				

MEASUREMENT	2005-06 Actual	2006-07 Actual	2007-08 Target	2007-08 Estimate	2008-09 Target
P1. Percentage completion of third floor County Counsel remodel.					100%

## 2008-09 PROPOSED FEE ADJUSTMENTS

### DESCRIPTION OF FEE REQUEST

- The office will propose a fee increase to cover actual costs of service currently provided.

### SERVICE IMPACTS

Fee increases will permit the department to maintain service levels and recover actual costs.

If there are questions about this business plan, please contact Robin German, Chief of Administration, at (909) 387-5456.